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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000896

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CASC](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: COM'S FAREWELL CALL AT FOREIGN AFFAIRS

REF: A. RANGOON 893

[1](#)B. RANGOON 845

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During an August 3 farewell call on the Deputy Foreign Minister, the COM pressed for the release of ASSK and other opposition leaders and appealed for a more regular dialogue between GOB officials and Embassy officers. The COM also addressed several Amcit cases, gaining consular access to one prisoner and a visa extension for a defendant in a civil case. However, a lack of response on issues associated with teachers at our American Center is troubling and we believe the GOB is attempting to disrupt our highly visible outreach programs. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The COM and A/DCM met on August 3 with Deputy FM Maung Myint, revisiting issues raised earlier in the week (ref A). The COM reiterated that the GOB must release opposition leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi, in order to bring any credibility to the National Convention process. The COM added that their release; their inclusion in the political process; and the GOB's facilitation of roles for UN Special Envoy Razali and UN human rights rapporteur Pinheiro are prerequisites for improving relations, especially with ASEAN, the EU, and the United States.

[1](#)3. (C) The COM also appealed for a more regular dialogue between GOB officials and Embassy officers. She noted that Burmese authorities rarely make themselves accessible and she urged the DFM to meet more often with the Embassy's next leadership. The DFM joked that "you're a workaholic and you make us work too hard (by raising too many issues)," and the COM replied that the MFA should make working level officers more accessible to handle routine issues.

[1](#)4. (C) The DFM addressed three Amcit cases raised by the COM on August 1 (ref A):

--Amcit Andy Chau, arrest case (ref B): The DFM said he had personally spoken with the Home Minister and secured consular access at Insein prison for August 4. He noted that the GOB considers drug trafficking an extremely serious crime, but suggested that the Embassy request early release for the prisoner. "We have released hundreds of foreign prisoners from over 15 countries," he said, "and on a humanitarian basis we would be prepared to do more."

--Amcit immigration/civil lawsuit case: The COM requested resolution of the case, noting that it had dragged on for months. The DFM said that lawsuits between relatives over family inheritance could take one or two years to resolve, but said that the GOB would, "as a humanitarian gesture," permit the Amcit to extend her visa and remain legally in Rangoon for the duration. The COM said that defendant should be treated fairly, and not prejudiced because of her U.S. nationality.

--Amcit contract teacher: The COM again requested an explanation for the visa cancellation and deportation on July 21 of an American Center contract teacher. The COM noted that the employee had worked at the American Center for four years without incident and had renewed her visa in early July. The DFM said the Ministry of Home Affairs claimed that the employee had "broken government regulations," but added that he could get no further details from the Ministry of Home Affairs. He said he sympathized with the employee, who had personal effects in Rangoon; offered that she could re-apply for a visa ("but it will be difficult"); and advised that the Embassy inquire with the Home Ministry for an explanation.

[1](#)5. (C) The COM also raised the issue of other contract teachers at our American Center. She explained that the MFA had recently started redirecting the teachers to the Ministry of Education (MOE) for their visa renewals, but the MOE refused to accept the requests. The DFM said that the MFA would only process visas for diplomats and demurred on explaining why the apparent new procedures had been put in place. He suggested that the Embassy demarche the MOE at senior levels and acknowledged the lack of GOB coordination

on the issue by saying, "You've been here three years and know how (our system) works."

16. (C) Comment: Although the DFM was unresponsive on ASSK and other political issues, he was well briefed and animated when discussing the Amcit cases. We are pleased to regain consular access to the Amcit prisoner as well as the visa extension for the Amcit defendant in the civil case. However, the lack of response on American Center issues is troubling. We will be pursuing these cases with the Ministries of Home Affairs and Education, but we believe the GOB is attempting to disrupt our outreach programs at the American Center, where we provide quality language instruction to 1,100 students a year (including political party members and former political prisoners) and library access to upwards of 1,000 visitors a week. End Comment. Martinez